

ROUGH, BUT FRIENDLY

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“Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man’s money into his sack, and to give them provisions for the way: and thus did he unto them.”
Genesis 42:25

AN immense number of persons came down into Egypt from all parts of the world to buy corn. Many of these Joseph never saw. Many others came into his personal presence. I do not find that of all who came, he treated any of them roughly, except his own brethren. “Strange!” you will say, and if you did not know the sequel of the story, it would not only seem strange, but cruel. You would not know how to account for such a thing.

Very like this is the manner of God’s providence. There are thousands of people living in this world, with all of whom God deals according to wisdom. We all bear trouble in a measure, for, “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.” Some have more troubles than others and these often happen to be those who are dearest to the Lord. If any man escapes the rod, the true-born children of the royal family of heaven never can.

Some may sin and prosper, but the righteous, if they sin, suffer. The ungodly are permitted to fatten like sheep for the slaughter, to have no bands even in their death. Their strength is firm, they are not in trouble, as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. But as for God’s people, the waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. Through much tribulation they inherit the kingdom. To them is a special promise which is sure to be fulfilled—“In the world ye shall have tribulation.”

Now, if we did not know the end of the Lord and His great design in thus dealing with His people, it would seem to be a strange, inexplicable mystery that the best beloved should be the most afflicted, and that the brethren of the reigning Savior should be those whom He treats most roughly. Others take their sacks of corn and go—these ’tis true, shall have their sacks filled and more, but they shall not go until first there have been some rough passages of arms between them and the brother, who, though he loves them so well, speaks so shortly to them.

Laying it down, then, as a rule, that God’s servants will be dealt roughly with by their Master, that the brethren of Christ must accept it, I shall now proceed to offer a few thoughts, which, peradventure, may be comfortable to those of God’s people who are in trouble.

From the text and its surroundings, I gather this truth—

I. WHEN THE LORD IS ABOUT TO GIVE GREAT FAVORS, HE OFTEN DEALS ROUGHLY WITH THOSE WHO ARE TO RECEIVE THEM.

Joseph intends to bless his brethren. He has the most liberal of the royal designs towards them, but he first deals roughly with them. Before the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to give His church her last and most transcendent blessing in His millennial reign of splendor, there are vials that are to be poured out. There will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be the shaking of heaven and earth—great distress, famine, pestilences and earthquakes. The greater the blessing, the greater the trial that shall precede it.

So, too, with our own souls. When the Lord Jesus Christ intended to save us and to give us a sense of pardon of our sins, He began by convincing us of our iniquity. He dealt heavy blows at our self-righteousness. He laid us in the dust and seemed to roll us in the mire. It seemed as though He delighted to tread upon us, and to crush our every hope, and destroy every fond expectation. It was all to wean us from self-righteousness, to pull us up by the roots, to prevent our growing and taking fast hold on the

earth, to constrain us to rest in His blood and righteousness, and to seek our soul's life entirely from Him.

That great blessing of salvation was, with the most of us, at any rate, preceded by thick clouds and tempests. We were convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, and our heart trembled, and afterwards, when He had dealt roughly with us, He said, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee: go in peace."

It seems, then, our experience is general and common, that the love letters of our Lord Christ have come to us in black envelopes and there has generally been a thunderstorm preceding a shower of special mercy. The clear shinings have been after the rain. The flood tide has come in most gloriously, but there has been an ebb first. It has always been so with us till now.

I think experienced Christians begin to dread their joy and to expect blessings from their sorrows. When things go ill apparently, they know they go well really, and when things go well apparently, we are very apt to fear and tremble for all the good which God makes to pass before us, and fear lest in the dead calm, there may lurk some mischief to our souls.

Why does the Lord deal roughly with His servants when He means to bless them? Is it not to *keep them sober*? High spiritual joys have about them an intoxicating element to our poor nature. "Lest I should be exalted above measure," said the apostle, "there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me." Sometimes the trial comes before the mercy, sometimes with the mercy, sometimes after the mercy, but a trial and a high degree of spiritual joy are usually wedded together, so that when you get the one, you may look out of the window for the other. 'Tis to keep us sober.

Here is a brisk gale of spiritual influence upon our fluttering sail. What then? and why? Our poor bark would soon be upset, but God ballasts us with a weight of affliction, so that the vessel may keep steady amidst the waves. Master Brookes gives us a simile, in which he shows us the danger there is even in the best and most spiritual enjoyments—he says, "Suppose a man loved his wife so very dearly and gave her so many rings, and jewels, and earrings, that she prized these and wore them till she began by and by to dote upon her ornaments and to forget her husband—you could not blame him if he took these away, because he wants her love for himself, not for his gifts."

Now, instead of taking away these things, which it would be necessary for Him to do in order to keep us from spiritual ruin, the Lord is pleased to checker our lives. There are the bright stripes, or evidences of grace, and then there are the black squares of our troubles and afflictions. In that way an equilibrium is kept up—we are balanced—we do not grow top-heavy. We are enabled to walk safely in the ways of the Lord. That is one reason He speaks roughly and deals graciously, to keep us sober.

Is it not likewise, to *keep us humble*? When a child of God gets one inch above the ground in his own esteem, he gets an inch too high. Whenever the man of God says, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," he is very close to spiritual bankruptcy. None are so rich in grace as those who pine for more. None are so near to fullness as those who mourn their emptiness—the men who find their fullness not in themselves, but in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Brethren, those ten sons of Jacob must have felt their importance evaporate when Joseph put them in prison. Here they were "true men," as they said, "the sons of one man," but no respect is paid to the patriarch or to their patriarchal descent. They are put in prison as if they were common spies, whose fate is generally the most ignoble.

Now they begin to think of themselves in a very different light from that in which they did when they set out with their money in their hands to pay for their corn and have their money's worth. They were gentlemen, merchant traders when they entered Egypt, but after awhile they seemed like beggars in their own esteem, and better still, they begin to recollect their faults.

They call to remembrance that they were verily guilty concerning their brother. And the Lord never intends us to ride the high horse in thinking large things of ourselves. One thing I have always noticed as an observer, that whenever any man of God begins to get great, God always makes him smart. I think I

have never seen a brother prospering in the ministry, or anywhere else, who began to be too large for association with his brethren, too good and too holy, perhaps, even to meet with common Christians—such a man has never kept up long—that balloon has come down—that bubble has ere long gone to pieces.

The profession of very extreme holiness has generally ended in the most dolorous iniquity, and the professed exaltation of the heart on account of talent and success has generally led to degradation and shame. Hence, the Lord, who would not have us exalted above measure, speaks roughly to us to keep us humble, as well as to keep us sober.

Why does He deal roughly with us? Is it not *to give us another reason for coming to Him*? Jacob's sons might not have come down to Egypt again. They might have said, "We would rather starve than go to be bull-baited by the lord of the land." But when Simeon is in prison they must go down. They have a reason for going, and a reason which overcomes them, let them strive against it as they may. And child of God, when the Lord favors you with His smile and with the light of His countenance, He takes care at the same time to give you a trouble that shall constrain you to come to the mercy seat.

Oh! but I think it is a blessed thing to go to the throne of grace on an errand. Many pray out of custom, perhaps that is well, but I believe there is no praying like the praying of a man who has got an errand. He who goes to God because he needs must go has something to ask for—and these rough dealings of God keep us well stocked with motives for being much on our knees, for much pleading with the Father of mercies that He would deliver us out of affliction and out of temptation, and is not this kindness on our Father's part thus to deal roughly with us that He may compel us to the sweet duty of prayer?

Moreover, brethren, does it not strike you that the Lord's rough dealings with His children, when He intends to bless them, *have the effect of making them see how utterly dependent they are for that blessing upon Him*? Why, Jacob's sons could now see that Joseph could lock them up for life, or take away their lives, or could send them back if he pleased with empty sacks to starve. They were entirely in his hands. They had no more power to escape than the dove has from the talons of the hawk.

So God would have us know that we are entirely and absolutely in His hand, as the clay in the hand of the potter. If He pleases to withhold His hand, all the world and all heaven cannot help us. If the Lord did not help you, how shall I help you, out of the barn floor or out of the winepress? That well stopped, all the world is walled up—there are no other bottles that can water you.

Child of God, you are as dependent today upon the bounty of heaven, as at your first conversion. A babe in grace is not more dependent upon God than the mature and venerable Christian. Our life is in the hand of Christ. Our breath is in His nostrils. Let the foundations of our lives, either natural or spiritual, be taken away by a cessation of divine power, and we crumble into spiritual and into physical death.

We shall hold on our way, glory be to God, but not from any power that is in us, nor through our own innate strength. These shall melt away, and droop and die under the exigencies of our spiritual pilgrimage. It is from the overflowing fountains of inexhaustible strength we must derive our supplies and so hold on to the end.

Thus, treating us roughly makes us like bottles in the smoke—we become dry, and shriveled up, and empty—still, it leads us to see how much the Lord can do for us. Being brought into need, it shows that all that is done, is done of His mercy and His sovereignty, and not of our merit, nor through any concurrent help from us, but altogether, utterly, and alone of Himself.

Now, child of God, let me put this point to you very plainly, without saying anything further, are you in very deep trouble tonight? Do all God's waves and billows go over you? Does deep call unto deep at the noise of His waterspouts? Then expect that now some great blessing will come of it. That stone on the lapidary's wheel has been cut, and cut, and cut again. That other stone in the corner of the shop is but a common pebble and he never vexes it upon the wheel, for it is worthless. But the more precious the stone is in His esteem, the more diligently does He cut its facets.

You are dear to God. Therefore, is it that He tries you again and again, but good shall come of it, and you shall blaze and sparkle, and glitter with grace which would have been otherwise unknown to you. Your tribulation shall work patience in you, and patience shall work experience, and experience hope, and hope shall make you not to be ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in you.

You are trading in a profitable market. There is no usury so heavy as the interest of affliction. The black ships of trouble come home laden with pearls of grace. Therefore, be of good cheer. Take the rough usage from your brother Joseph—you must and will prevail. But I must change the tune.

Our next observation upon the text is that, while the Lord deals roughly with His servants—

II. HE USUALLY GIVES THEM AT THE SAME TIME PROVISION BY THE WAY, that they may be enabled to bear His roughness and to endure all the difficulties through which they are called to pass.

You observe Joseph had put Simeon in prison and had treated his other brethren very roughly, yet he gave them their sacks full of corn and put money into the mouths of their sacks, and then, as a third blessing, he gave them provisions for the way. Never does a child of God pass through trial without some special provision being made for him during his time of need.

But what provision is this? Why, dear brethren, there are different provisions according to different needs. Sometimes the child of God under trial has a *wonderful sense of divine love*. “Oh! how He loves me,” says he. There comes stroke after stroke—husband dies, child is buried, the property is wasted—yet the dear child says, “I cannot weep or repine, for I feel God loves me. I know not how it is, but I feel it so fresh and strong upon my soul, and I have such a wonderful impression of that dear love of His, that it quite overcomes my sorrows and takes the edge off my griefs.”

And let me say, there is nothing that under trial can support a soul so well as the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. To know that my Father sees it all and orders all in love—in special love to me—oh! this makes the back strong enough to bear a very world of trouble and yet not to be wearied.

At other times God’s servants have been fed on *a joyous view of the covenant of grace*. I have known some who in their trouble have come to understand the deep doctrines of the Word as they never understood them before and could then say with David, “Although my house be not so with God, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” And as they look to the provisions of that covenant, to the sureness of the covenant, to the blessings of the covenant, to the everlasting nature of the covenant, their souls have been so ravished and transported with joy that they could beat poverty, or pain, or whatever form of roughness their heavenly Joseph might choose to put upon them.

Others of the Lord’s people have been sustained in their trouble by *a delightful outlook to the end of their sorrows and the better land on the other side of Jordan*. Oh! there have been saints upon sick beds who have scarcely felt the torture of their pain or their disease, through the excess of bliss they have enjoyed in foretastes of the better land. Martyrs have been heard to call the fiery branches a bed of roses. And sometimes it has been almost questionable whether they did suffer. The bodily pain must have been there, but the wonderful excitement of sacred joy in the thought that they were so soon to be with Christ, and that their burning pile was but a chariot of fire to bear them to their Beloved, has lifted them up above the tormenting sensation.

Treated roughly they have been, but they have had such provision by the way that they forgot the roughness as they rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory. Well may the traveler trip over a rough road when his home is so near before him—the glittering spires of the new Jerusalem, the everlasting rest, the sweet fields arrayed in living green, the rivers of delight—

*“Oh! could we stand where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o’er—
Not Jordan’s stream nor death’s cold flood*

Should fright us from the shore.”

Roughly treat us as You will, good Lord, if we have this money in our sack’s mouth, and this provision by the way, we will be well content.

The Lord sometimes sustains His people under His own roughness by the *recollection of their past experiences*. “My God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from Hermon and from the hill Mizar.” The faithfulness of God in the past has been so vividly remembered, that the child of God could not dare to doubt. The evidence of God’s love was so strong, vehement, and fresh in his soul that he cried, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him—let Him do what He will to me, yet do I know that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me.” He could hear these silver bells, thousands of them, all around, above, below, beneath—ringing out this tune—

*“For His mercy shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.”*

Oh! let the hell drum be beaten as loudly as the devil can beat it, and let affliction come from heaven, and earth, and hell all at once—while we know that God’s mercy endures forever, our mouth shall be filled with laughter and we shall boast in the name of the Lord.

The saints of God have also had this provision by the way. In their sufferings *they have enjoyed a sight of the greater sufferings of Christ*.

*“Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.*

*How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive,
Which He drank quite up that sinners might live;
His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?”*

A sight of the steps of the Crucified One has often checked the tears which have been flowing, while the enraptured child of God would stand and sing in holy wonder—

*“Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before;
He that into this kingdom comes
Must enter by this door.”*

Thus I might continue to show what kind of provision it is that the Lord gives by the way, but the time fails me. Indeed, for me to tell you of it has nothing to do with receiving it. Oh! child of God, let me rather put it close to you and may the Holy Ghost comfort you with it. You shall never be sent on a journey without provender and you shall never have to go to battle at your own charges. If the Lord tries you, it shall never be above what you are able to bear, for He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

He may treat you roughly, but He will fill your sack. He may speak sharp words, but He will put your money into your sack’s mouth. He may take your Simeon and bind him before your eyes, but He will give you provision by the way till you get to the goodly land where you shall need no more provision, but the Lamb shall be forever with you, and you with Him.

The third lesson which we draw from this is, that though sometimes the Lord treats His people roughly, more roughly than He does any other people, yet—

III. HE GIVES THEM THE BEST OF THE BARGAIN IN THE LONG RUN.

These, his brethren, were the only ones Joseph spoke roughly to, but they were the only ones upon whose necks he afterwards fell and wept. They were the only ones that made the tears come into his eyes. They were the only ones of whom he said, "I will preserve you alive." They were the only ones for whom he sent the wagons to bring them down, saying also, "Regard not your stuff, for the whole land of Egypt is yours." They were the only ones whom he brought in before Pharaoh and said, "Behold my father and my brethren." They were highly favored, and they dwelt in the land of Goshen and they had rest.

Child of God, you will have the best of it soon. Even now you are the only ones that Christ deigns to call His brethren. You are the only people of whom it is written that you are a people dear unto Him. You are the only people for whom Christ prayed, for He said, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, that they may be one." You are the people for whom all things work together for good.

As many of you as have believed in the Lord Jesus and are resting upon Him for salvation, though your path may be rough and thorny, you are the only people who have God Himself to be your Captain, who have His fiery cloudy pillar to be your direction, and who shall have the everlasting rest, the eternal portion. Be of good courage.

Your riches in reversion are such that you can smile at poverty. Your rest which is yet to come is such that you may well despise the labor which makes you eat your bread in the sweat of your face. Your glory which is to come so excels that you may forget your poverty and your reproach. Your being with Christ will be so superlatively, divinely blessed, that you may well for awhile bear to have a rough word or two from Him.

*"Forever with the Lord.
Amen, so let it be."*

When it shall be so, when you are forever with the Lord, if you could be ashamed, you would be ashamed and confounded to think that you ever murmured, or ever entertained a thought of complaint against the kind and gracious God who ordered all things for the best for you to promote your profit and His glory. May that thought cheer you, you who are depressed and cast down, and may you go on your way rejoicing.

As for such as have never trusted Christ, it often makes my heart bleed when I talk of these things, to think that I cannot speak to them, that I cannot tell them that these comfortable things are theirs. Oh! unbeliever, you are an alien and a stranger to the privileges of heavenly citizenship. For you there is no blessedness, either now or hereafter. Why will you remain an unbeliever? Why will you continue to be careless and godless, Christless?

I trust the Lord has designs of love to you. Leave your sins, for you must either leave them or be lost. Trust the Savior. Rely wholly upon His blood and righteousness, for there is no other righteousness that can ever help you, but if you cast your soul upon Him, it shall be well with you forever. God grant that we may all be found in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as brethren who are in allegiance to Him. So may it be with you all. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATHEW 7:13-29; 15:1-12

Verse 13. *Enter ye in at the strait gate:*

It is very unpopular. The great ones will recommend to you great liberality and breadth. But enter yet in at the strait gate.

13. *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

That is a rule that is very unfashionable in these times, but depend upon it, the Lord who gave it to us, meant it for all times. That which seems narrow, which costs you self-denial—that which is contrary to the will of the flesh—that which does not seem to charm the eye and fascinate the senses—go after that. “Enter ye in at the strait gate.” You will not be likely to err much, or too much on that side.

Let this be a gauge to you. That kind of preaching which allows you to indulge in sin—that sort of teaching which lowers the standard of God’s Word for you, and makes you think more of your own judgment than of the teachings of Christ—away with it. Let others have it if they like. “Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.”

14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

It is still so. Indeed, none find it unless grace finds them. He who made that gate must go after the wandering sheep and bring them through that gate. They will never choose it of themselves.

15. *Beware of false prophets.*

Some honor and esteem all prophets. “Is not it a very high office? Is not a prophet a man sent from God?” Yes, and for the very reason there are counterfeits whom God has never sent. Beware of false prophets.

15. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

They look just like sheep. They look just like shepherds, but it is only their clothing. The mere hypocrite is the goat in sheep’s clothing. But a false prophet is a wolf in sheep’s clothing, because he can do so much more harm, and will do so much more damage to the church of God.

16. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.*

They are sure to come out in their actions. If you have not got the knowledge of theology and the like, to be able to judge their teaching, yet the simplest persons can judge their actions. “Ye shall know them by their fruits,” which are sure to come out sooner or later.

16. *Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs of thistles?*

Did you ever find a cluster of grapes growing upon a thorn bush? Grapes and figs are pleasant fruit, and holy living, true devotion, communion with God—these are the things that are sweet to God and to good men. But they come not of false doctrine. They are not seen in false prophets. Such prophets despise such things as these. They are for worldly ways and places of worldly gaiety they can frequent. Not so the servants of God.

17-19. *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

That is what comes of it in the end. It may spread itself abroad and may gather much admiration to itself for its verdure, but there is an axe being sharpened and a fire being kindled.

20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

You cannot judge them by their bark or by the spread of their branches, or by the verdure of their leaves, or even by the beauty of their blossoms in springtime. “By their *fruits* ye shall know them.” The Savior here gives us a very earnest and very necessary warning, lest we should be deceived, for there are such who are not only deceived by their own sins, but deceived by false prophets, who are among Satan’s best agents.

21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;*

They were very sound in doctrine. They called Jesus, “Lord.” They believed in His deity. Apparently, they were very devout. They said, “Lord.” They worshipped Him. They were very importunate and earnest. They said, “Lord, Lord,” crying to Him again and again. But “not everyone

that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” External utterances, however orthodox—professions, however sound, are not enough.

21. *But he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Oh! dear friends, there must be holiness in us, for without holiness no man can see the Lord. It is not knowing the will of the heavenly Father, but doing it which is the mark of divine election. If God’s grace has really entered into us, we, like the prophets, shall be known by our fruits. And if we are not doing the will of our Father, who is in heaven, we shall not come to the heaven where He is.

22. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?*

Yes, so did Balsam. Was not Saul also among the prophets, and yet neither Balsam nor Saul was accepted of God, but they were castaways. “Have we not prophesied in thy name?” A man may be a preacher, and an eloquent preacher, and he may even have some blessing upon his preaching, and yet be cast away forever.

22. *And in thy name have cast out devils;*

Yes, and there was one that cast out devils, and he was a devil himself, namely, Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him. He went out and wrought miracles in the name of Christ—and then sold Christ for pieces of silver.

22. *And in thy name done many wonderful works?*

Yes, and we may do many wonderful works, and yet be wonderfully deceived. It is not wonderful works—it is holy works. Not works that amaze men, but works that please God, which are the proof of grace in the soul. Well, there will be some who will be able to say that they prophesied—that they cast out devils—that they did wonders.

23. *And then, will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

“I was never acquainted with you. I never had anything to do with you. I was never on speaking terms with you. You never had any fellowship with Me. I never had any fellowship with you. Your motives and designs were very different from Mine. I never knew you.” If Christ once knows a man, He will never forget him. But He says, “I never knew you. Depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Get you gone—you are none of Mine.”

Oh! that we might never hear that dreadful sentence pronounced upon us in the day when Christ shall come. And yet we may be preachers. We may be wonderworkers. We may be famous in the visible church of Christ and yet, He may say, “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” These are solemn thoughts. Let them sink into your hearts.

24. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

It was the doing of those sayings that was the building on the rock. You may hear and only increase your condemnation, but to do what you hear is to have a good foundation. This man built his house upon a rock. He was not, therefore, free from troubles. Oh! no.

25. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house;*

Wherever you build, troubles will reach you, and if you are a child of God, you are sure to have troubles. “A Christian man is seldom long at ease.” The road to heaven is usually a rough one and there are thieves, and lions, and giants, and all sorts of enemies on that road. It was a house built on a rock. But the rain descended, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat upon that house.

25. *And it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

Is not that glorious? “and it fell not.” Then the more rain, and the more flood, and the more wind, the more was the house praised for its good foundation and for its stability. “It fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.” Oh! if God has made us holy in life so that we are doing what Christ preaches, especially this Sermon on the Mount, of which this is the close, then we need not fear all the troubles of life or death, for it shall be said, “It falleth not, for it was founded upon a rock.”

26-27. *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,*

For fools get into trouble. However big a fool you may be, you will have big troubles all the same for that. “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” Houses built on sand must still be tried. “And the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew.”

27. *And beat upon that house and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

For it could never be set up again. It was down once for all. A man may fail in life, and yet commence again and succeed. But once be a bankrupt with your soul and you are broken forever. “It fell, and great was the fall of it.” Do not believe those who tell you that to lose your soul is a small affair, which will be made right by and by, by either annihilation or restoration. It is all a ruinous lie. This is the truth concerning it—“It fell, and great was the fall thereof.”

28-29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

He did not quote this learned Rabbi and that—or propose this theory to their thoughtful consideration—but He said the truth, and left the truth to work its way upon the minds of men, knowing that many would reject it, for it would be a savor of death unto death to them—but knowing also that some would receive it, whom He had ordained unto eternal life, to whom it would be a savor of life unto life. Let us copy our divine Master’s example and speak boldly as we ought to speak.

MATTHEW 15:1-12

Verses 1-2. *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*

A very amazing omission certainly, but it seems to have struck them as a very great crime. “They wash not their hands when they eat bread”—as if the commands of God were not enough, men must overload us with their own commands, and sometimes the very people who would see us break God’s commands without being at all distressed are dreadfully shocked if we do not keep theirs, showing clearly that they have a higher estimate of themselves than they have of God.

3-6. *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*

The cant said, “I cannot give you any help. I have vowed to give it as a subscription to the synagogue, or to the temple, therefore I cannot give it to you,” and if he could plead that he had given it as a gift in the form of a religious offering, he was exempted from assisting his own parents. “Well,” said Christ, “you do by this make the commandment of God of none effect.” “You hypocrites”—our Savior is the most gentle of men, but how plainly does He talk, and how honestly does He denounce everything like hypocrisy.

7-9. *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Now, may God save us from these two faults. The first is that of being content with the outside worship of God. Unless our very hearts worship, there is nothing whatever in the outward performance of religious rites or religious worship. Indeed, it is hypocrisy to draw near to God with the lip and knee when the heart is not there.

The next evil to be dreaded is teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Whatever is not plainly taught in Scripture is of no binding force upon any conscience, and it is evil to invent rites and

ceremonies which are not taught in Holy Scripture. We must mind what we are at. If we have not the plain warrant of Christ's command for our teachings and our doings, we shall rather vex the Spirit of God than honor Him. Whatever our intention may be, we have not any right to worship God, otherwise than according to His own mind. If we do, it will not be worship and not acceptable with Him.

10-11. *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

“And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man”—not that which he eats and drinks, “but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” That is—what he says—there is the point.

12. *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?*

Some very kind friends are very jealous of the preacher, lest he should offend anybody, and they will come in all tenderness of spirit and say, “Know thou, that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.